

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT - OVERVIEW

- \$1.9 trillion in funding to individuals, schools, businesses, and areas suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Of that total at the national level, CT municipalities are slated to receive \$2.55 billion (\$1.56 billion to general government / \$995 million to schools)
- The Town of Mansfield will receive a total allocation of ~ \$7,543,000 that is disbursed via two equally sized “tranches” (\$3.771 million in 2021; \$3.771 million in 2022)
 - This amount does not include ARP Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund allocations received by Mansfield Public Schools (\$754,781) or Regional School District #19 (\$835,051)

ELIGIBLE USES OF ARPA FUNDING

- **Support public health response:** Fund COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral healthcare and certain public health and safety staff
- **Address negative economic impacts:** Respond to economic harms to workers, families, small businesses, and nonprofits, or impacted industries and re-hiring of public sector workers
- **Replace public sector revenue loss:** Use funds to provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the pandemic
- **Premium pay for essential workers:** Offer additional support to those who have and will bear the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure
- **Water, sewer and broadband infrastructure:** Make necessary investments to improve access to clean drinking water, invest in wastewater and stormwater infrastructure and provide unserved or underserved locations with new or expanded broadband access

PROPOSED PROJECT/INITIATIVE DESCRIPTION SUMMARIES

Supporting Public Health Response (\$562,000)

- Mansfield Public Library Facility Improvements (\$350,000): The biggest component of this proposed project is **upgrades to the library’s Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system**. The facility’s current system is nearing the end of its useful life. We have problems with maintaining proper air balance and good humidity in the high humidity months. We are able to keep within the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standards at the high end but would be better if we could improve to get to the middle of the standard range. These upgrades will also provide public health benefits with respect to reducing potential for spread of airborne viruses.

The proposed funding also includes a **wireless access pavilion**. The new pavilion will improve the library’s ability to support workforce development and community resilience. This 14’X24’ pavilion will be equipped with tables and chairs, and an electrical charging station for devices such as phones and laptops. Patrons can sit socially distanced while accessing library Wi-Fi, borrow laptops or Chromebooks, and access staff assistance as needed. The pavilion will be available for use during daylight hours except in the depths of winter. Community members may access internet resources and receive professional

staff assistance with activities such as processing government application forms and searching the internet for information, including education, health, and workforce development sites. The pavilion will also be available when the library is not open, allowing people to work independently on their own schedule. With a Wi-Fi accessible outdoor shelter, patrons can more comfortably work on their own, or receive assistance from staff, as we plan regular instructional sessions for our patrons.

The Mansfield Library Pavilion will add to the library's already robust community services. This investment in our community will make a difference by offering safe support and resources to the citizens of Mansfield and the surrounding area in a convenient and accessible space.

Finally, proposed funding includes the **installation of quiet study pods**. In order to improve its support of workforce development and continuing education, library leadership proposes the purchase of two self-contained study pods for installation in the main library building. These pods will provide quiet study space, with motion-activated ventilation and lights to ensure safety, and sound blocking materials to ensure privacy. This will increase the ability of community members to access library resources in a quiet, safe environment, while having the opportunity to receive professional staff assistance with activities such as processing government application forms and searching the internet for information, including education, health, and workforce development sites. There are currently no designated quiet study spaces in the library.

- Mansfield Community Center Facility Improvements (\$42,000): The following facility upgrades are proposed at the Mansfield Community Center to support an improved public health response:
 - **Providing alternative programming** with use of computer laptops, microphones, cameras and video screens for instructors in providing virtual programming options to assist in containing and mitigating COVID-19 and other viruses.
 - Replace 4' cubicle divider walls with 6' partitions for separation of **five close work spaces** to contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses. The project would also improve work efficiency and privacy needs. Includes installation charges.
 - **Replace shared microphones** and synchronize with two receiver bases with individual microphones for instructor use. Currently, fitness instructors share head/body microphones. Individual use microphones would help contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.
 - **Acquisition of two 20'X40' canvas event tents** (pole, cross cable or pagoda). Allows for continuation of community programs and associated revenue during pandemics and serves as an option to help contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses. Tents can be used to by all age groups and used a minimum of 9 months of the year. Tents could be shared with other departments when not in use by the Parks and Recreation Department.
 - **Installation of WiFi service at two town parks** (Bicentennial Park and Southeast Park) that are actively used by families.

- Human/Social Services Mobile Outreach (\$60,000): Human Services, in cooperation with the Mansfield Board of Education (MBOE), is proposing to **purchase a van and materials needed to offer mobile human/social service outreach** and positive youth development services to Mansfield families. With transportation ~~and other~~ key among the barriers to accessing services, this vehicle would allow both the MBOE and Human

Services to bring the services directly to the locations most in need of these services and programs. This would include, but not be limited to: (1) sign-up for social services and entitlement programs; (2) educational materials; (3) psycho-social presentations; (4) mental health and wellness services; (5) adventure-based and positive youth development programs, and; (6) information and referral services.

- Enhanced Funding for Human Services Programs (\$110,000): The feedback from the ARPA Community Input Survey indicated public support for enhanced investment in the area of human/social services. For the purposes of this discussion, monies specifically being recommended for allocation to “external” social service organizations are reflected in the “Addressing Negative Economic Impacts” funding area (see below). The funds recommended in this section would be used by the Town of Mansfield’s Human Services Department. Part of what this would include is **expanded nutrition programming for seniors** who are most at risk for food insecurity and social isolation. This will include development of a grab and go lunch/dinner program, expansion of café to four days weekly, and monthly community educational dinners. It would also **expand transportation options to access health care** and town services and programs. The program will also include electronic/touchless registration and payment for all services and programs and assistants with tutoring seniors in the area of technology. Additionally, this funding would be used to **support the Mansfield Farms to Family program**, which was created to bring awareness to the local food sources in our community. To date, this has been accomplished by connecting 15 identified households with local farms through a sponsored CSA share program, and serving an estimated additional 100 households during the growing season, with four or more fresh food box distributions each to include fresh produce and dairy.. The participating Mansfield residents have reported they enjoy the variety, the high-quality of products from local CSA’s, and the increased access to healthier foods. Many have also stated they would not have the ability to participate in a CSA share without this program and are grateful for the opportunity. The project supports the local economy by purchasing goods directly from local farm businesses while providing increased access to residents who would otherwise encounter prohibitive economic barriers to this service. In addition, this also provides households with access to local fresh produce.

Addressing Negative Economic Impacts (\$2,075,000)

- Funding Support for Area Social Service Agencies (\$400,000): In recent months, the Town Council expressed a desire to see a robust portion of the Town of Mansfield’s ARPA allocation be programmed for **funding support to area social service agencies that are presently providing valuable services to residents of our community**. This desire seemed to be shared by the community at large based on the results of the ARPA Community Input Survey that was administered earlier in late-summer. Recipients/award amounts should be informed by formal recommendations transmitted to the Town Council by the Mansfield Human Services Advisory Committee. Organizations be awarded funds will also need to be held accountable for the use of the funds and the application process should establish clear/measurable objectives for how the allotted funding will be used to maximize benefit to the community.
- Affordable Housing Trust Fund “Seeding” (\$500,000): This funding will help with the implementation of the Town’s newly adopted Affordable Housing Plan through creation of more affordable/workforce housing units in Mansfield and increasing access to a high

opportunity community. The Affordable Housing Plan identifies several strategies for increasing access to affordable and workforce housing in Mansfield, including the **creation of a housing trust fund** (which the Town Council recently approved). Seed money for the trust fund could be used for a variety of initiatives to **assist low and moderate income residents, including: down payment assistance, mortgage assistance for homeowners that fell behind during the pandemic, and creation/construction of affordable/workforce units**. Potential projects include: acquisition of land to facilitate development of affordable/workforce housing; contribution to the Eagleville Green project to help leverage other funds; and acquisition/renovation/sales of units to income qualifying families.

- Eagleville Green Project Funding Support (\$750,000): Eagleville Green is a proposed 42-unit mixed-income multi-family residential project located at 113-121 South Eagleville Road. As of November 15, 2021¹, 74% of the proposed units would be designated affordable, with the remaining units available to be rented at market rate. As currently presented, the **project would include 22 units affordable to households at 50% of median income, 7 units affordable to households at 60% of median income, and 2 units affordable to households at 80% of median income**, with the remaining units being market rate. Applications for project funding are currently pending with the Connecticut Department of Housing and the Connecticut Housing Finance Agency. The proposed funding would **support the replacement of existing sewer main and installation of a new main to connect to the pump station at Wright's village**. The Assistant Town Engineer has identified an alternative design that would allow for elimination of the on-site pumping station, which would reduce the applicant's initial construction costs for on-site infrastructure and on-going operational costs; however, redesign of the on-site sewer system would be required. The alternative design would result in a deeper installation depth in South Eagleville Road as well as a longer pipe run due to the depth change. While the public improvements would be more costly than the original design, the alternative design would also support future connections to properties located across the street from the subject property (108-128 South Eagleville Road, including Oakwood Apartments). Additionally, one of the issues noted by CTDOH in its initial review of the application for state bond funds is the minimal funding committed to the project by non-state agencies. The **proposed funding would present significant leverage and help to make the project more competitive**.
- White Oaks Condominiums Wastewater System (up to \$200,000): The White Oak condominiums were developed in the 1960s prior to the establishment of Inland Wetlands regulations and current health code requirements. The septic systems were constructed within and adjacent to wetland areas and sanitary problems have necessitated numerous repairs over the years. In the late 1990s, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection notified the condominium association and the Town that the existing systems were impacting surface and groundwater resources and that a permanent sanitary system solution needed to be implemented. A formal consent order has not been issued due to the association's ongoing efforts to find a permanent solution; however, if a permanent solution is not implemented, a consent order could be issued. As the Town is ultimately responsible per state statute, the consent order would be issued to us. While there is no location on the condominium property where a code compliant system could be installed, soil testing was authorized by the Town Council in

¹ The affordability levels are subject to change based on requirements of potential funding agencies such as the Connecticut Department of Housing and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority.

2004 for a portion of Dunhamtown Forest. Based on the results of this testing, it was determined that a code compliant system could be constructed on Town property. The Town Council authorized an easement for construction of a new sanitary system in October 2008 subject to several conditions, including the donation of \$15,000 to the Town's open space fund.

The condominium association has been seeking funding for the system since approval of the easement. The current estimated project cost is approximately \$1.3 to \$1.5 million. To reduce cost burden on residents, the association has requested consideration for allocation of ARPA funding. While these units are typically more affordable than other dwelling units in Mansfield, there are no affordability restrictions that would assure units remain affordable. The condominium association president has indicated that they may be **amenable to establishing affordability restrictions on some of the condominium units in exchange for funding for the septic system**. Based on staff's research, the association currently appears to own one of the units. Additional research is needed to determine the value of affordable housing deed restrictions per unit and the associated number of units that would need to be restricted to obtain the maximum support of \$200,000.

- **Business Relief, Façade Improvements, and Marketing (\$150,000)**: One objective of this allocation is to **provide one-time relief for Mansfield businesses**. Ideas include: 1) direct grant to businesses through an application process (first come, first serve) (individual awards would be capped, i.e., \$25,000); 2) personal property tax credit relief, which would provide a direct financial benefit to eligible business without changing the tax rate (and this benefit would go directly to the business owners instead of the landlord/property owner in the case of a leased space); façade improvement grants, and; providing technology to vendors at the Mansfield Farmers Market to allow them to accept credit card payments, SNAP payments, and "Farm Bucks." This proposal also includes **funding for the *Four Town Action Plan for Economic Vitality*** that was completed in 2020. A steering committee and several subcommittees are working on implementation of some of the key initial initiatives. Marketing of the region is a key focus. The towns of Coventry and Tolland have put money into their FY21-22 budgets for implementation. The funding requested would supplement their efforts. The funding would be focused on a website/landing page for the four towns, a logo, and other marketing tools. This would also complement the grant application submitted in recent months by the four towns for \$200,000 in FEMA funding to assist in implementation of the action plan.
- **Arts Relief Fund (\$75,000)**: This represents **funding support to local arts organizations**. The Connecticut Arts Alliance has suggested a few ways including partnering with regional arts council (Cultural Coalition represents Mansfield) or local community foundation to re-grant funds to Mansfield, or provide direct grants to local arts organization. The Alliance is suggesting that 1% of a community's ARPA funds go toward arts, and this proposed amount roughly equates to that. This would include both direct relief to artists/organizations as well as public art. Such an expansion would potentially assist artists outside of Mansfield, but also offer public benefits. Public art could be part of beautification efforts in different commercial areas as well as the new school. One possible geographic focus area is the Four Corners. Town officials recently learned that street trees cannot line the sidewalk in front of the proposed Standard multi-family housing development project (proposed by Haven Communities) due to the potential for root intrusion into the sewer pipe. It may be possible to substitute public art

pieces for trees in the interest of promoting quality aesthetics. It could also be used to enliven public spaces in Downtown as well as other areas, which appears to be consistent with several of the recommendations flowing from the work recently completed by a strategic planning consultant focusing on the Downtown area.

Replacing Revenue Loss (\$2,025,000)

- Municipalities are able to compute reduction in revenue by comparing actual revenue to an alternative representing what could have been expected to occur in the absence of the pandemic. Analysis begins with the last full year prior to the pandemic and projects forward at either (a) the recipient's average annual revenue growth over the three full years prior to the public health emergency or (b) 4.1%, the national average state and local revenue growth rate from 2015-18. The Finance Department has produced a very conservative estimate of revenue loss replacement for 2020 and 2021 (\$2.5 million). The current recommendation is to **allocate \$2 million in ARPA funds to replace lost revenue**, with the lion's share going to the Parks & Recreation Fund. An additional \$25,000 is being recommended to retain a qualified financial consulting services **firm to work with the Parks and Recreation Department on a financial sustainability action plan** for the Mansfield Community Center.

Premium Pay for Essential Workers (\$150,000)

- Since the start of the pandemic, many municipal and school workers have put their physical wellbeing at risk to meet the Town's needs. Premium pay is one means by which the Town can acknowledge municipal and school employees for stepping up during these unprecedented times. Although ARPA authorizes municipalities to administer premium pay to essential workers in multiple sectors (i.e., including the private sector), it would be financially prohibitive and logistically/administratively infeasible for the Town to do this, and it is not clear to what extent private sector employers may have already taken similar action with funds they were directly/separately allocated by the federal government. The current recommendation is to allocate \$150,000 in ARPA funds to provide a modest financial award (potentially in the form of gift cards to local businesses) to eligible municipal, MBOE, and Region 19 employees. Purchasing and distributing gift cards in this manner accomplishes multiple objectives in that it not only provides a monetary award to employees, it also provides economic stimulus to local businesses.

Water, Sewer & Broadband Infrastructure (\$2,550,000)

- Expansion of the Four Corners Water & Sewer Service Area (\$2,250,000): This project proposes **expanding the existing water and wastewater service area to include Goodwin Elementary School site and other housing in the area**, particularly apartment complexes. The total estimated project cost is \$3 million and would therefore require a 25% (\$750,000) match in the form of property owner assessments and/or securing other forms of state or federal grant funding. Expansion of water and wastewater service will allow for the growth in Four Corners, an area designated for growth in the POCD, and as part of Mansfield's Opportunity Zone. Water and wastewater service to Goodwin Elementary School site specifically will allow for more

opportunities to redevelop the site for new uses for the school building or site (i.e., affordable housing) once Goodwin is formally decommissioned as a public elementary school following the opening of the new consolidated elementary school. This project can be tied into revitalization of Hunting Lodge Road with more single-family housing opportunities to stabilize the neighborhood and create affordable/workforce housing.

- Digital Inclusion Initiative (\$300,000): The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the **critical importance of broadband access**. The Town of Mansfield has relied on technology to work, learn, receive a wide range of services (health, government, and business), and continue social and emotional connections. Digital access was a vital component of maintaining the wellbeing and daily lives of Mansfield's residents. Unfortunately, in many cases, members of our community were literally disconnected from vital services and opportunities during the pandemic. Whether it was lack of sufficient broadband service, unreliable personal devices, confusion about how to operate technology, or websites that were difficult to navigate, these barriers isolated many of our residents. While in-person interactions are again more accessible, the reality is that the pandemic has accelerated our society's reliance on Internet based resources across all sectors. Our businesses, our employers, our schools, our governments, our medical providers, and our social groups are continuing to use technology more than ever before. Prior to the pandemic we could convince ourselves that digital access was a luxury. We now know post-pandemic that all citizens need reliable and robust online access.

Our proposal leverages ARP **funding to expand broadband for Mansfield's residents** by reducing barriers to digital access through:

- ❖ Affordable, reliable, and sufficiently robust Internet access.
- ❖ Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user.
- ❖ Digital literacy training and support.
- ❖ Accessible and participatory online access to local government meetings, activities/programming, and services for inclusive use of broadband access.
- ❖ Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration.

The goal of this project is to **promote digital equity for citizens of Mansfield**. Digital Equity is a condition in which individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy. Digital Equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

Staff in the Information Technology Department have furnished a detailed project funding request and associated justification. Please see separately enclosed document.